

I say I regret that because, as we probably know, more than half of our Nation's military retirees have chosen to retire near a military treatment facility. That is their family. We as a Nation asked them to leave their parents, leave their loved ones to go to places like Korea, Vietnam, Persian Gulf, Panama. We are getting ready to ask them to go to places like Afghanistan.

In doing so, for many of them, they lose the ability to maintain their nuclear family, so their family becomes the Air Force, the Marines, the Army, the Navy.

Since they were 18 years old, they were told they could go to a military treatment facility; but now because of the draw-down in the Department of Defense, there are not as many doctors as there used to be, and because the defense budget is tight, the Department of Defense made the decision that for those who have reached the age of 65, you cannot go to the base hospital anymore. You have got to find a private sector doctor. You have got to leave the family. I think that is a tragedy.

Again, over half of our Nation's military retirees intentionally bought a home near a base so they could use that base hospital, and now the same Nation that can provide \$16 billion in foreign aid, the same Nation that can waive the budget rules to bail out the airlines, give their corporate executives 20 and \$30 million a year to run those companies into the ground, the same Nation that can spend money left and right, waiving the rules anytime they feel like it for those who really have not earned it to this extent are going to tell our Nation's military retirees that because you do not fit quite right into the budget we cannot find the money to solve your problem.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking for an amendment that has already passed this House overwhelmingly about a year ago right now. There were 406 of my colleagues who voted to say to our Nation's military retirees that they could continue to use that base hospital and that Medicare is going to reimburse that base hospital for their care. After all, the sailors, the soldiers, the Marines, the airmen paid their Medicare taxes just like everybody else; and if it is their choice to go to a military treatment facility, then that is where they ought to be able to go.

Unfortunately, the law now blocks them from doing so. We sent that bill over to the Senate; and unfortunately the Senate chose to take our language that says they have to do it and said to Medicare, they may do it, they can reach an agreement if they feel like it.

Well, the bureaucrats at Medicare did not feel like it; and so now our soldiers, our sailors, our airmen, our Marines, our coast guardsmen, they are the ones that have to suffer.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking for a real simple thing on the defense authorization bill next week. I am asking for an opportunity for this House to speak in favor for fulfilling the promise of life-

time health care to our Nation's military retirees and a Nation that is going to find \$320 billion to defend itself that just last week spent an additional \$40 billion on defense, one would think we could find a hundred million or so to do that for our Nation's military retirees.

I am particularly disturbed, Mr. Speaker, that you have put the word out that if I so much as ask for that amendment that you are going to pull the defense authorization bill. Let me say that again. If an elected representative of the people of south Mississippi so much as asks for a recorded vote on an amendment to fulfill the promise of lifetime health care for our military retirees, the Speaker of the House says he will not allow that bill to take place at all.

Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent for 2 additional minutes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair cannot entertain that request.

Mr. TAYLOR of Mississippi. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

□ 2330

HEALTH CARE FOR MILITARY RETIREES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PLATTS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Mississippi.

Mr. TAYLOR of Mississippi. I would like to thank my colleague from Hawaii and my other colleagues for bearing with me.

Mr. Speaker, the point I want to make is, I wish this Member had the power to keep some bills from coming to the House floor. I wish I could have kept NAFTA from coming to the floor because it has lost so many jobs for my fellow Mississippians and every American. I wish I could have kept portions of that tax bill that saw to it that half of the \$1.2 trillion in benefits went to the wealthiest fat cats in America, not the average Joes.

Mr. Speaker, if you can find the time and waive the rules to give the fat cats a tax break, you can find the time and you can waive the rules to let our military retirees go to the base hospitals. I am asking for an up or down vote. Be a decent human being and give us that vote.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

REGARDING ASPECTS OF SEPTEMBER 11 EVENTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues. I am due on a TV broadcast that starts rather soon. I know this sounds rather late, but it is prime time back in my own California.

I rise to address several aspects of the recent tragedy, the recent outrage. I want to associate myself with the statements of the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BONIOR) when he came to this floor and talked about how important it was that we treat everyone with dignity and with respect, and decried several incidents involving discrimination against those of the Muslim, Sikh and Hindu faiths.

Let us, though, also applaud the 99.999 percent of Americans who in fact today are treating their fellow Americans with tolerance and respect. I had a large public meeting in my district in which one of the two leaders of our Islamic community commented that, yes, we should all treat everyone with respect and, yes, he was chagrined by some recent reports. But he only wondered how much worse it would be in any other country in the world for any other minority group. And, in fact, in our own country in the 1940s, we did not act with the same level of respect and tolerance that we are showing today.

Let us remember that America is not anti-Muslim and not anti-Islam. In fact, the last three military engagements of the United States were for the purpose of defending Muslim people. We restored the independence of Kuwait. We then went on to save the Bosnian Muslims from genocide. And then we bombed a Christian country, Serbia, because of what Serbia tried to do to its Albanian Muslim minority. And now American and NATO troops are engaged in Macedonia for the purpose of achieving a just result for the Albanian Muslims who are a minority in that country. So let us not only condemn every act of intolerance, but let us applaud an overwhelming majority of Americans who are acting with tolerance even at a time when emotions run high.

Let me comment on those who suggest that we modify our foreign policy in the Middle East in order to placate Osama bin Laden, the Taliban, and other extremists. These calls do no honor to the greatest generation and its response to Pearl Harbor. After Pearl Harbor, there were some who suggested that all we had to do was change our foreign policy in the Far East, allow Japan to conquer all of China, and then we could avoid conflict. Instead, the greatest generation made the greatest sacrifices to win the greatest victory. It would be a dishonor to that generation for us to act any differently now that we have suffered the greatest loss of American life on American soil since our Civil War, a loss of life two to three times what we suffered at Pearl Harbor.

But not only is appeasement dishonorable, it is also, in this case, impossible. Because what motivated Osama bin Laden was a hatred for the fact that American troops are somehow "defiling" the soil of Arabia by being stationed there in defense of the Saudi and Kuwaiti regimes. Remember that if